E 457
.15
.R95
Copy 2

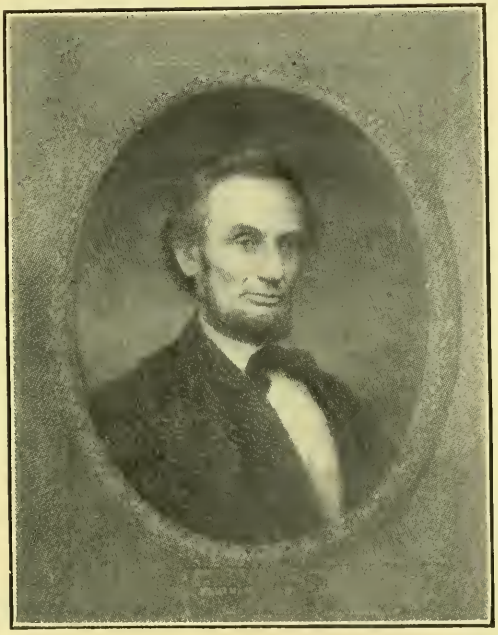
Lincoln

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
1800

Class E457
.15
Book .R95
copy 2

PRESENTED BY
Mr. Coleman

LINCOLN AND SICKLES



by
James Fowler Rusling

PUBLISHED BY THE
"THIRD ARMY CORPS UNION"
For Distribution to its members
MAY, 1910.

Copy 2

E457
.15
.R95
Copy 2

LINCOLNIANA

Gift
John E. Schwab
Dec. 8. 1927

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILROADS.

WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 19, 1902.

GENERAL D. E. SICKLES,
Gettysburg, Pa.

My Dear General Sickles:

My plan and desire was to meet you at Gettysburg on the interesting ceremony attending the unveiling of the Slocum monument; but to-day I find myself in no condition to keep the promise made you when last we were together. I am quite disabled from a severe hurt in one of my feet, so that I am unable to stand more than a minute or two at a time. Please express my sincere regrets to the noble Army of the Potomac, and to accept them, especially, for yourself.

On that field you made your mark that will place you prominently before the world as one of the leading figures of the most important battle of the Civil War. As a Northern veteran once remarked to me: "General Sickles can well afford to leave a leg on that field."

I believe that it is now conceded that the advanced position at the Peach Orchard, taken by your corps and under your orders saved that battlefield to the Union cause. It was the sorest and saddest reflection of my life for many years; but, to-day I can say, with sincerest emotion, that it was and is the best that could have come to us all, North and South; and I hope that the nation, re-united, may always enjoy the honor and glory brought to it by that grand work.

Please offer my kindest salutations to your Governor and your fellow-comrades of the Army of the Potomac.

Always yours sincerely,

(Signed) JAMES LONGSTREET,
Lt.-Gen'l. Confederate Army.

A True Copy,
D. E. SICKLES, Major General U. S. Army, Retired,
New York March 12, 1910.

THE 46th ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING of the 3D ARMY CORP UNION.

The interesting remarks prepared by General James F. Rusling in regard to an historic meeting of President Abraham Lincoln and Major-General Daniel E. Sickles, at Washington, just after the latter had lost his leg at Gettysburg, were, on motion of the members of the Third Army Corps Union, at their regular annual meeting in the Manhattan Hotel, New York City, ordered to be printed and to be read by General James R. O'Beirne, at the Banquet, in the unavoidable absence of General Rusling. The interest of the occasion was enhanced by the fact that General O'Beirne is the only living survivor of the officers who were present at the death-bed of President Lincoln, officially, throughout the sad scenes, and on duty as Provost Marshal of the District of Columbia, under the direct personal orders of the Secretary of War, Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, which he carried out through the calamitous night.

General O'Beirne, prefacing the delivery of General Rusling's written speech, as given in full below, said in part:

INTRODUCING REMARKS by Gen. James R. O'Beirne

"Before proceeding with the task assigned me by our untiring, efficient and indefatigable Chairman of the Executive Committee, Major William Plimley, and the members of the Third Army Corps Union, it may be beyond the proprieties for me to say that, originally, Major Plimley was to read to you the paper which I am about to voice, but his great tenderness of heart, as well as delicacy of feeling, would not permit him, he feared, without breaking down, to place before you the pathetic, instructive and far-reaching sentences that embalm a hallowed event, in which our great martyed President and our beloved Chieftain of the Third Army Corps were the enobled and renowed actors consecrating it as a dramatic

act, one of the highest in the scenes of the Rebellion; and indeed I fear that I, too, may find myself overmastered by its thrilling pathos. How I wish that General Sickles' address, with its lofty, soul-inspiriting eloquent sentences, to which we have just listened, in his affectionate salutation to his military family of the old 3rd Army Corps seated here about him, with their wives and families, their children and grandchildren, could be heard afar throughout the world, and not limited to this fascinating and charming arena. What a scene of wonderful human beauty and divine essence is here about us to contemplate; the great general, with his four score of years, that sit sweetly and lightly upon his noble front, and in full possession of his faculties, marking him as a genial, humorous, lovable patriarch, with the laughing spirit of a joscund boy, unimpaired alike in his appreciation of the current blessings of life, as in the love of his great manly strong heart, sending forth in a melodious accents his greetings to his glorious military family of heroes, gathered here about him. Benedictions be upon him, and may he be long spared to give cheer to us and enliven our descending years. I wish that instead of being delivered to this limited audience, his exhalted declarations of patriotism, lofty manhood and soul-stirring force could be heard and felt throughout the Republic, from Quoddyhead to the Golden Gate, and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian Border, ringing throughout the hills and vales along the laughing rivers, up into the silent monitor mountains of America's broad expanse, telling them that the people's voice of great love of freedom is not yet weakened nor silenced; that the martial spirit which, under God, saved the Country, its flag and its government, shall reverberate down the centuries, and in loud acclaim speak for "the Union now and forever, one and inseperable."

Let us go forth anew from hence, with our vows renewed,

and tell the children of the ages to come what the Third Army Corps Union did for them and posterity at Gettysburg.

Address of General James F. Rusling at the 46th Anniversary of the Third Army Corps, Union, Hotel Manhattan, New York, May 5, 1910.
Sickles and Lincoln after Gettysburg; or Abraham Lincoln's Religious Faith.

Companions in arms, and Comrades of the Third Army Corps:

I salute and greet you to-night, and bid you one and all a hearty hail and God-speed. What the Tenth legion was to Cæsar; what the Old Guard was to Napoleon; this, and more, the Third Army Corps, under Sickles, was to the Army of the Potomac, and History will keep its splendid valor and brilliant achievements memorable forever. But I am to speak to-night not so much of these, but by invitation of your Committee am to tell of a memorable interview between our distinguished corps commander, Major-General Sickles and President Lincoln, after the Battle of Gettysburg, in my immediate presence; or as Virgil wrote, "Part of which I was and all of which I saw." I hold it to be of marked historic value, as fixing absolutely the Religious Faith of Abraham Lincoln, and as such I commend it to your consideration.

It was on Sunday, July 5th, 1863, the Sunday after the Battle of Gettysburg. The battle, as you know, was fought heroically on both sides on July 1st, 2nd and 3rd. In the terrible conflict of Thursday, July 2nd, held by many to have been the real battle of Gettysburg, because of the titanic fighting and awful Confederate losses, which took the life out of Lee's army, General Sickles, while in active command of the Third Corps, had been frightfully wounded by a Con-

federate ball or shell; his right leg had been amputated above the knee on the field; the next day or so he was carried by his men, on a stretcher, to the nearest railroad (some miles away) and the Sunday following, arrived in Washington. He was taken to a private residence on F Street nearly opposite to the Ebbitt House, where he had for several months reserved a floor for his own use. Here I found him on the first floor, reclining on a hospital stretcher, when I called to see him about 3 P. M. of that day. I was then Lieutenant Colonel and Chief Quartermaster on his staff, and naturally eager to see "My General". The only other officer present was Captain Fry, also of his staff, now long since deceased. I found the General in much pain and distress at times, and weak and enfeebled from loss of blood; but calm and collected, and with the same iron will and clearness of intellect, that always characterized him in those Civil War days, and apparently always will.

Naturally, we all three fell to talking about the battle, but had not been conversing long when General Sickles' orderly at the door announced "His Excellency the President", and immediately afterwards Mr. Lincoln strode into the room, acompanied by his little son "Tad", then a lad of ten or twelve years. He was staying out at the "Soldiers' Home" for the summer with his family. But having heard of General Sickles' arrival in Washington, he rode in on horseback, with a squad of cavalry as escort, to call upon him. He was tall and lanky; he wore a high silk hat ("stove pipe"), a long frock coat of black broad cloth, high top boots with trousers inside and spurs on; and altogether was about as ungainly a looking specimen of either statesman or cavalryman, as can well be imagined. The meeting between those two great men of that war period was cordial, though touching and pathetic; and it was easy to see they held one another in high esteem. They

were both born American politicians, though of very different schools. They both loved the Union sincerely and heartily. and Sickles had already shown such high qualities, both as statesman and soldier, that Lincoln with his usual sagacity had been quick to perceive his value in the struggle then shaking the nation. Besides, Sickles was a prominent War Democrat, able and astute, and Lincoln was too shrewd to pass by any of these in those perilous war days, especially one who had raised a whole brigade of soldiers and placed them in the field, at his own expense, and commanded them ably and skillfully, as Sickles had done.

Their first greetings over, Mr. Lincoln sat down and crossing his prodigious arms and telescopic legs, soon fell to cross examining General Sickles as to all the phases of the recent combat at Gettysburg. He inquired first, of course, as to Sickles' own ghastly wound, when and how it happened, and how he was getting on, and encouraged him. Sickles was somewhat despondent, very naturally; but Lincoln "jollied" him, and said that he was something of a prophet that day, and that he would prophesy it would not be long before General Sickles would be out and up at the White House, where they would always be glad to see him. He passed next to our great casualties at Gettsyburg, (equalling if not exceeding Wellington's at Waterloo) and how the wounded on both sides were being cared for; and finally came to the magnitude of our victory there and what Meade proposed to do with it.

Sickles lay on his stretcher, with a cigar between his fingers, puffing it leisurely, and answered Mr. Lincoln in detail, but warily, as became so astute a man and so good a soldier; discussing the great battle and its probable consequences with a lucidity and ability remarkable for one in his condition—exhausted and enfeebled as he was by the shock of such a wound and amputation. Occasionally he would wince with pain, and

call sharply to his valet to wet his fevered wound. But he never dropped his cigar, nor lost the thraed of his discourse, nor missed the point of their discussion.

When Mr. Lincoln's inquiries ceased, General Sickles, after a puff or two of his cigar in silence, renewed the conversation substantially as follows:

"Well, Mr. President, parden me, but what do *you* think about Gettysburg? What did you think about things, while we were campaigning up there?"

"O", replied Mr. Lincoln, "I did not think much about them. I was not much concerned about Gettysburg."

"Why, how was that?" rejoined Sickles excitedly, as if amazed. "We heard you folks down here in Washington were much worried, and you certainly had good cause to be, for it was 'nip and tuck' with us much of the time!"

"Yes, I know that. And I suppose we were a little 'rattled' now and then. Indeed, some of the Cabinet talked of Washington's being captured, and they ordered a gunboat here, and went so far as to send away some United States archives, and wanted me to go too, but I declined. Yes, Stanton and Welles, I believe, were both 'stampeded' somewhat, as we say out West, and Seward, I reckon, too. But, I said, 'No, gentlemen, I am not going aboard any gunboat; we are going to win at Gettysburg!' And we did, right handsomely. No, General Sickles, I had no fears of Gettysburg!"

"Why, how was that, Mr. President? Why not? Everybody else down here, we heard, was more or less 'panicky'."

"Yes, so I suspect, and a good many more than will own up to it now. But really, General Sickles, I had no fears of Gettysburg, and if you want to know why, I will try to tell you, confidentially. Of course, I don't want you to say

anything about this now, nor Colonel Rusling here either. People might laugh, if it got out, you know. But the fact of the business is, in the pinch of the campaign up there, when we had sent General Meade all the soldiers we could rake and scrape, and yet everything seemed going wrong, Washington endangered, Baltimore threatened, Philadelphia menaced, and the whole country in an uproar, I went into my room one morning and locked the door, and got down on my knees, and prayed Almighty God for victory at Gettysburg. I confess I was at my very wit's end. I told the Almighty this was his country, and our war His war, but we could not stand another Fredericksburg, or Chancellorsville, or Peninsula campaign. And then and there I made a solemn vow with my Maker, that if He would stand by you boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by Him! I prayed, 'Oh God, have mercy upon me and my afflicted people! Our burdens and sorrows are greater than we can bear! Come now and help us, or we must all likewise perish! And Thou canst not afford to have us perish! We are Thy chosen people, the last best hope of the human race!' And so I 'wrestled' with Him, as Abraham or Moses in ancient days.

And after so 'wrestling' with God, sincerely and devoutly, in solemn prayer, for a considerable time, I don't know how it was and I can't explain it (I'm not a 'Meeting man', you know), but some how or other a sweet comfort crept into my soul, that God Almighty had taken the whole business up there into His own hands, and things would come out all right at Gettysburg. And He *did stand* by you boys there, and now I *will stand* by Him! No, General Sickles, I had no fears of Gettysburg, and that is *why!*"

Mr. Lincoln said all this with great solemnity. When he had concluded, there was a silence, that nobody seemed disposed

to break. Mr. Lincoln especially appeared to be communing with the Infinite One again, with a strange look of introspection upon his face, while General Sickles continued to puff his cigar, but more slowly. The first to speak was General Sickles, who presently resumed as follows:

"Well, Mr. President, what do you think about Vicksburg, nowadays? How are things getting along down there?"

"O", answered Lincoln, very gravely. "I don't quite know. Grant is in command down there, and still keeps 'pegging away' at the enemy. And I rather think, as we used to say out in Illinois, he 'will make a spoon or spoil a horn' before he gets through. Some of our Senators and Congressmen think him slow, and want me to remove him. But, to be honest, I kind of like U. S. Grant. He doesn't worry and bother me. He isn't shrieking for reinforcements all the time, like some of our other Generals. He takes what soldiers we can give him, considering our big job all around, and we have a big job in this war, and does the best he can with what he has got, and does not grumble and scold all the while at me and Stanton like some others. Yes, I confess, I like General Grant, U. S. Grant, United States Grant, Uncle Sam Grant, Unconditional Surrender Grant. There is a great deal to him, first and last. And Heaven helping me, unless something happens more than I know now, I mean to stand by Grant a good while yet. He fights, he fights!"

"So then, you have no fears to-day about Vicksburg either, Mr. President", added General Sickles.

"Well, no, I can't say I have," replied Mr. Lincoln, very soberly but firmly, "the fact is—but don't say anything about this either just now—I have been praying over Vicksburg also. I have 'wrestled' with Almighty God, and told him how much we need the Mississippi, and how it ought to flow 'un-

vexed to the sea,' and how its great valley ought to be forever free, and I reckon He understands the whole business down there, 'from A. to Izzard'. I have done the very best I could to help Grant, and all the rest of our generals (though some of them don't think so); and now it is kind of borne in on me, that somehow or other we are going to win at Vicksburg too. I cannot tell how soon. But I believe we will. For this will save the Mississippi and bisect the Confederacy, and be in line with God's everlasting laws of righteousness and justice. And if Grant only does this thing down there—I don't care much how, so he does it *right*—why Grant is my man and I am his the rest of this war!"

Of course, President Lincoln did not at that moment know that Vicksburg had already fallen on July 4th, and that a United States gunboat was then speeding its way up the Mississippi to Cairo with the glorious news, that was soon to thrill America and the civilized world through and through. Gettysburg and Vicksburg! Our great twin victories of the Civil War! What were they not to the Union in that fateful summer of 1863? And what would have happened to the American Republic had both gone the other way? Of course, I do not pretend to say, that Abraham Lincoln's faith and prayers saved Gettysburg and Vicksburg. But they certainly did not do the Union any harm. And the serene confidence of the beleaguered President, was an unspeakable comfort and joy on that memorable July 5, 1863.

I never saw President Lincoln again. But this conversation made a deep and lasting impression upon me. I have told it hundreds of times since, both publicly and privately. It has passed into American and English histories, and gone around the world. Clearly it fixes the *quaestio vexata* of Abraham Lincoln's Religious Faith, unless he was a hypocrite and hum-

bug, which is unthinkable. Perhaps I should add, I wrote home about it the same day, and now give it here as the very truth of history, much of it *ipsissim averba.* General Sickles himself, has also corroborated it substantially, on many occasions, both publicly and privately. I count it one of the chief honors of my life, that I was present and privileged to hear it.

Mr. Lincoln's words left me the profound impression that in these great national emergencies, he walked and talked with his Maker and relied upon Divine counsel and guidance. Perhaps the crises of the Civil War, involving a whole continent and a vast people, with world-wide and time-long results and its tremendous facts and responsibilities strengthened his faith in God as the Supreme Ruler of men and of nations, (As a like experience affected William of Orange and Cromwell and Washington). So that in the end Abraham Lincoln became a Ruler worthy to rank with even these "the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thoughts of all their minds articulated by his tongue."

Of all the great figures of our Civil War, Lincoln alone looms up loftier and grander, as it seems to me, as the decades roll onward, and his place in the pantheon of history is secure forever.

As Lowell said so well:

"Our great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes;
These are all gone and standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly, earnest, brave far-seeing man,

Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, our first American."

Or in the statelier lines of Alfred Tennyson, over the great Duke of Wellington, when he lay in state, beneath the dome of St. Paul's, with all England bowed in sorrow:

"While the races of mankind endure,
Let his great example stand—
Colossal, seen of every land—
And make the soldier firm,
The statesman pure,
Till in all lands, and through all human story,
The path of duty be the way to glory.
And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame,
For many and many an age proclaim,
At civic revel and pomp and game,
And when our long illumined cities flame,
Our ever loyal iron-leader's fame,
With honor, Honor, Honor, honor—
Eternal honor to his name.

Speak no more of his renown,
Lay our earthly fancies down;
And in the great Cathedral leave him—
God accept him! Christ receive him!"

TO MAJOR GENERAL DANIEL E. SICKLES, U. S. A.

BY GENERAL HORATIO C. KING

(Read at Third Corps Banquet, N. Y., May 5, '08.)

Turn out the guard! The General comes,
  A grand old hero he,
Our Bismarck, rugged, bold and strong,
  And young at eighty-three.
"Don't mind the guard!" those days are past
  We've long laid down our arms,
And shining peace and plenty reign
  Where once rang war's alarms.

I see him in the Nation's Halls,
  Where passion ruled the hour,
And Southern madness sought to wrest
  From Northern hands the power
To hold our country firm and strong;
  I hear his warning cry:
"Come back! the nation you proclaim
  Is doomed to fail and die!"

How memory spans the fleeting years,
  And we are young again,
When thro' the sunny Southern fields
  We tramped, a million men!
When ghastly war o'erspread the land,
  And sorrow's piteous wail,
And widows' sobs and orphans' tears
  Filled every hill and vale.

I see him when the storm breaks forth,
With patriotic zeal
Call to his side a gallant host,
No thought of woe or weal;
Excelsior on their standard shone,
Thro' long and bloody war,
No stain upon that banner fell,
No blots its records mar.

I see him on that famous field,
The bravest of the brave,
Where Longstreet's legions strove to drive
The Third Corps to its grave.
The fight was bloody, fierce and long,
And Sickles' name shall stay
Forever in the Halls of Fame
As he who saved the day.

And Gettysburg his crest shall be,
While veterans still will tell
How stricken well nigh unto death,
Him through that fire of hell
They bore along the thinning ranks
As calm and unafraid
(Mid cheers that rang above the guns)
As if on dress parade.

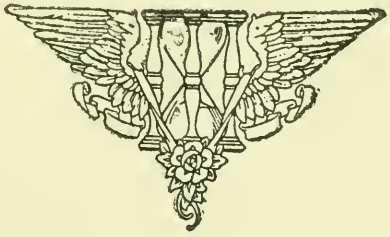
Hail to the Chief, our loving friend,
May many years be thine!
We toast thee in our heart of hearts,
And not alone in wine.
The land for which you fought and bled
Will cherish aye your name,
And write it high among those born
To everlasting fame.

PRESENTATION
OF THE
HEADQUARTERS FLAG OF THE SECOND DIVISION OF THE THIRD ARMY CORPS.

Major Lovell Purdy, of the 74th New York Volunteers, in a few well-chosen remarks, presented the original Headquarters Flag of the 2d Division, 3d Army Corps (General Hooker's old Division), to the Hooker Association of Massachusetts. The Flag was received by General G. A. Goodale, President of that Association, in a touching and patriotic speech. A large delegation from Boston was present to salute the old flag under which they had marched and fought for so long a time.

Major William P. Shreve, who has been Treasurer of the Third Army Corps Union during the past twenty-five years, has recently compiled from the original records and other sources a most interesting and valuable book entitled "The Story of the Third Army Corps Union." It is prefaced by an admirable likeness of our lamented and gifted Secretary, Col. Edward Livingston Welling, and by many biographical sketches and incidents relating to meetings of the Union.

The book will be sent to members of the Union upon application to Major William P. Shreve, 147 Tremont St., Boston, Mass.



D. Fickles
Major Genl U. S. Army
(Retired)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00025217585